Vicissitudes of the Green New Deal – Teach-in
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Debating Eco-Socialist Futures (August 3, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MNwY_6X1ZI)
Matthew Huber, author of Climate Change as Class War
Andrea Vetter, author of The Future of Degrowth: A guide to a world beyond capitalism

Matthew Huber: "Too often when we think of environmental politics it's about the world unravelling and the world in crisis - of dystopic visions. I think it's important have a positive vision of how we rebuild the world. That was what has so exciting in 2018-2019 when the Green New Deal came on the scene and you had these beautiful visions - you can just think of the AOC posters - of public investment, of building public monuments, which are the solution, to climate change. We really must confront the fact that if we are going to face this crisis it's about world making; we have to build an entirely new energy infrastructure… We have to start thinking as socialists that are building working class movements how we will seize those processes of building, those processes of production, not only how we are going to make them sustainable, but just, make them beneficial for the masses of workers who will do the building."

Andrea Vetter: "I disagree. It's not so much about building but about care. The world we are envisioning where we truly and deeply care about each other and about all the other being out there... The word for that is pluriverse, rather than universe, with many different local solutions. We need a common no, but many yeses. It's time to let go of the fantasies of making big plans, of building everything anew and shiny. Its more the time to think what it means to live in the ruins of capitalism, to achieve a truly just society."

Matthew Huber: "We have to have a theory of power [to bring about fundamental change]. If we look at history we have been under capitalism for 200-250 years and we have only seen the working class as the only agent able to build a significant counter-power to countervail the counter-power of capitalism in history. That power has been completely demobilized and eroded for the past 50 years. Adolph Reed Jr. calls neoliberalism capitalism without a labor movement. We look through history and it's the labor movement that built the institutional power that really challenged capital, who is who we need to challenge to solve the [climate crisis]. We need to envision how we will rebuild a working-class opposition. It's not that they have a moral superiority, but it's because they do the work, they produce the profits for capitalism, they can organize and challenge that power, as they have done through history."

Andrea Vetter: "Matt says we are under capitalism for 300 years, but we are under colonialism for 500 years and patriarchy for 5,000 years, so I think we should also think of those. Because I think what is more likely is that this type of capitalism will end in a climate crisis and we will end up with a new feudalism, super unjust system, which increase all kinds of injustice worldwide. To really oppose this threat I do not see this classical Marxist, male, working class, mostly white, industrial worker will be the main subject of this kind of revolution, because they gained a lot over the past 50 years in the global north from all this injustice and so I don't think the main response will come from the global north at all. We in the North could be allies to anti-colonial fights, to feminist fights and struggles. But there has to be a broad coalition of movements, including those other struggles".

Andrew Feenberg, Beyond the Politics of Survival, 1979

"Nevertheless, in practice the unfinished work of history continues, indeed intensifies the very horrors and upward struggles that threaten survival and yet promise also a precious spark of light to those hitherto excluded from the benefits of civilization. Insensitivity to this ambiguity leads to a politics of despair that would freeze the current relations of force in the world - and with them the injustices they sustain as a condition for solving the issue of survival. That this is an impossible route to salvation is abundantly clear from the whole experience of the nuclear and environmental movements. What we most need to learn from this experience is that action to end history is still action in history for historical objectives. The human species is not yet the subject of the struggle to survive, and so this struggle itself becomes a facet of the contradictory impulses of the very class and national struggles the obsolescence of which it demonstrates. From this dialectic there can be no escape".

Chris Cutrone, Class consciousness (from a Marxist perspective) today, 2012

"What Marx and Engels recognized that perhaps distinguished them from other socialists, however, was the utterly unique character of the modern, post-Industrial Revolution working class. What made the modern working class, or "industrial proletariat" different was its subjection to mass unemployment. Marx and Engels understood this unemployment to be not a temporary, contingent phenomenon due to market fluctuations or technical innovations putting people out of work, but rather a permanent feature of modern society after the Industrial Revolution, in which preserving the value of capital was in conflict with the value of workers' wages. Unlike Adam Smith in the pre-industrial era, who observed that higher wages and lower profits increased productivity in society as a whole, after the Industrial Revolution, increased productivity was not due to workers' greater efficiency but rather that of machines. This meant, as the director of the Marxist Frankfurt Institute for Social Research Max Horkheimer put it, that "machines made not work but the workers superfluous."

[….]

"The difference between Marx's time and ours is not in the essential problem of society, its self-contradictory form of value between wages and capital, but rather in the social and political conflicts, which no longer take the form primarily, as in Marx's time, of the "class struggle" between workers and capitalists. "Class" has become a passive, objective category, rather than an active, subjective one, as it had been in Marx's day and in the time of historical Marxism. What Marxists once meant by "class consciousness" is no more".